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Ref: Shasta-Trinity National
Forest - Grants and
Agreements Program
2014/15

March 31, 2015

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS
OHMVR Division
1725 23rd Street
Sacramento, CA 95816
Attn: Grants Manager

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Dear Sirs:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide personal comments on the OHMVR Division Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program applications for 2014/2015. I am a retired Outdoor Resource Planner with the U.S. Forest Service, Shasta-Trinity National Forest. For over 35 years I was involved in land management activities on the National Forest level, including OHV management. Currently I remain active with the forest as a volunteer and as a member of our local off highway, (Redding Dirt Riders) organization. Above all, I am also an outdoor recreation enthusiast of our public lands.

The future management of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest and the Off Highway Vehicle Program is very important to me, my children and grandchildren.

Since the Shasta-Trinity National Forest dedicated itself to an active OHV effort in 2011, the forest leadership has made progressive strides in acknowledging, implementing, and managing legitimate off highway vehicle activities. As appropriate to do so, the forest has integrated existing OHV use and future opportunities into other land use management efforts such as transportation planning, fire rehabilitation, watershed analysis, vegetative controls, etc.

Although the Shasta-Trinity has made incremental progress in providing sustainable and user friendly OHV opportunities on the forest, there is still much work that will need to be done. Moving forward can only be accomplished at the direction of the forest leadership team in the Program of Work, (POW's) and by providing specific budget support to the OHV Program on the forest management units specific to OHV interests. With limited appropriations from the U.S. Congress to support National Forest recreation management, continued OHMRV support to the forest is also critical to the future success of OHV management on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. I appreciate all of your financial support to date.

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However, OHMVR financial support must be commensurate with what can be reasonably and realistically accomplished "on the ground". OHV management activities are weighed each fiscal year with a multitude of other forest priorities of work and competing actions. Close scrutiny must be taken to insure that any grant program dollars provided to the forest are not being overly used to fully or disproportionately replace already underfunded programs at all levels. Caution needs to be taken that, reoccurring forest programs such as developed and dispersed recreation care and policing, road maintenance, forest protection and other land stewardship responsibilities do not become heavily based on OHMVR grant funding.

Shasta-Trinity National Forest Ground Operations - 2014/2015

1.2 - Staff/Seasonal Technicians

The grant application requests **\$147,775** in grant funds with **\$56,243** in agency matching. This includes staff funding of **\$60,000** for 3-4 seasonal forestry technicians with no agency matching. This amount requested is excessive and not realistic for the conditions as they currently exist on the ground. There appears to be some, "build it" (an OHV program) and "they will come", (the OHV users) mentality to this request. OHV management activities should be funded at an appropriate percentage level in conjunction with other assigned collateral duties of permanent and seasonal employees.

1.5 - Resource Specialists

The grant application does not seek any grant funds for specialist involvement necessary for existing and future environmental analysis and monitoring efforts. The forest offers a small matching contribution of **\$3,500** for this effort. This is puzzling as the forest is actively working on land use analysis of the Beegum and Bagley projects with expressed OHV interests. The South Fork Watershed Center has recently sought out public involvement in this effort on the westside of the forest.

I am concerned that these ongoing and other planned land use areas will not be adequately funded in the individual Project Work Plans, (PWP's) to support the necessary specialist input specific to projects that might enhance new OHV opportunities. More funding commitment is needed from the forest to meet this future OHV planning, transportation review, and NEPA process.

3.1-9 - Materials and Supplies

The grant application seeks **\$17,850** for operational supplies, equipment, and signage, with no agency matching. Many of the specific items listed should be appropriately funded with both grant and matching funds commensurate with other planned recreation administrative needs.

5.1-3 - Equipment

The grant application seeks \$ **28,000** for the purchase of a UTV and various accessories with no agency matching funds. Close scrutiny needs to be made to justify the purchase of all expensive specialized equipment from OHMVR grant funds. The grant program recently funded the purchase of a Sutter 500 trail dozer for the forest. Unfortunately, recent personnel changes, restrictive agency licensing and operational requirements, safety considerations, travel distances to projects sites, contractual issues, partnership participation restrictions, and seasonal ground disturbance limitations have in one way or another contributed to a very limited or non-use of this specific specialized equipment.

Shasta-Trinity National Forest Education & Safety Trails Riders - 2014/2015

The grant applications seeks \$ **31,050** for OHV education and safety program with \$ **14,975** in matching funds. Successful OHV program management requires ongoing user involvement, education, and volunteerism. The application provides a reasonable plan to carryout these functions.

Caution needs to be taken to make certain that OHV management does not become "top heavy" with overhead personnel support. There is a tendency to over state administrative and program management needs that then directly or indirectly reduce grant funds needed at the unit level and in the field for operations.

The Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Supervisor's Office is located in Redding, California. In some cases the distance to many OHV use areas involves hours of travel time. (e.g.: Bagley; Hayfork;) Funding that is more directed to the OHV efforts on the individual management units, (e.g.: Resource Officer; seasonal technicians, community volunteers, etc.) are generally more beneficial to the user. However, as already mentioned, OHV funds should be only be granted commensurate with a fair percentage other appropriated land use and recreation management activities.

Shasta-Trinity National Forest Law Enforcement - 2014/2015

The grant application seeks \$ **15,000** for law enforcement patrols with \$ **5,002** in matching funds. Routine law enforcement presence and action should be applied in all OHV management programs. However, the proposed project action is both vague in content and it does not provide a full and adequate description need in some areas.

The applicant suggests that the Chappie-Shasta OHV area law enforcement patrols are the responsibility and administratively inclusive within the boundaries of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. However, this designated area is administrated through the Bureau of Land Management, (BLM), Redding Field Office and the patrols are generally

conducted by BLM and the local Sheriff's Office. The application states that BLM/FS/SO patrols are currently performed informally. If there is a joint cooperative geographical administration ongoing between governmental agencies, a formal agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. (MOU) should exist to establish clear guidelines, frequency of patrols, and financial accounting of the funds utilized.

The BLM routinely requests annual grant funds from the OHMVR for law enforcement patrols and Redding Field Office provides coverage within the boundaries of the Chappie-Shasta OHV Area. The lands adjacent to Chappie-Shasta that are within the boundaries of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest are either limited OHV lakeshore access sites or extremely remote areas from the managed riding area. These areas are not heavily impacted by ongoing OHV activities.

I strongly encourage the OHMVR to support the Off Highway Vehicle Program on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. It is a large forest with a diverse landscape that provide incredible outdoor recreation opportunities including some of the best OHV riding in Northern California.

Sincerely,



Michael C. Mitchell